

# R E A S O N S

## *For preventing the Scarcity and Dearth of Victual, that the Poor may not starve:*

*Humbly offered to the Consideration of the Honourable Justices of Peace, and Gentlemen Heritors &c, met at the Quarter Session at Edinburgh, instant 1709.*

**T**HE Present Excessive Price of Victual being very hard upon the Poor it must be a Charitable Work to Relieve them from that Extremity, in more or less, According as every one can to their Power and Capacity.

These who have Corn to Sell, would not take the Advantage, the necessity of those that wants, Let them Remember, there are heavy Curses Entail'd upon such as Offend in this Sort.

These who have any Power or Authority, to Regulate the Merkats, would do what is incumbent on them in such a Cause.

But the Question that Natively comes in here, is incumbent to them in that Behalf, Shal they fix the price at a certain Rate, that may not be Exceeded. No, the inconveniency of such a determination was found last dearth, when by a Proclamation the Meal was appointed to be sold at a certain price.

The Sellers brought some to the Merkats, but such as was very insufficient, and much short in quantity to the demands of the Burghers, so that the Remedy was worse than the Disease.

The French King has Made a late Edict Confiscating all Corn that shall remain after Harvest, but this has not had the pretended effect there: nor do I look upon it as a thing practicable here, as being inconsistent with the Liberties of the People who have power to dispose of their Goods to their own satisfaction.

But to insist no further on what means are not proper, let us think of what means may be proper for lowering the excessive price of Corn, which I humbly conceive may be what follows. viz.

1. That the Laws Prohibiting the Exportation of Corn after it aryses to such a Rate, (which now it much exceeds) be duly put in Execution, as well as those which allow Victual to be Imported in case of Dearth.

2. That Gentlemen who have Corn to Sell, would not Sell to Victual Mungers, who always endeavour to inhance the Price, but rather open their Granaries to the Country People, and others who Buy it for their private use, by which means the Buyers shall have it, the Meal-mungers profit cheaper than otherways they could get, and the Proprioter has full price, and ready Money instead of Trust, for the trouble of selling the whole.

3. Gentlemen who cannot Sell their Corn by Retail at home, would oblige those that Bargane with them to Sell by retail, when they come to their desired Port, &c. not to Cowpers who will certainly inhance the price by all possible means.

4. The Government would take care to provide necessary Convoys for North Country Shipping, in Transporting Victual from those parts, to such Harbours that ly near the places where it is most wanted.

5. But above all, that an exact account be taken of all Victual in the custody of all who have it to Sell, as well as those that have it for private use



use, those that give the Accounts short, to be fined in Proportion to the Quantity that is over, or to have the Superplus confiscated half for the use of the Poor, and the other half to the Informer.

Such Accounts being taken by Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and Magistrates of Burghs, and a Due Computation of the Consumpt made, I am fully persuaded it will be found that there is much more Corn then is sufficient to Supply the Country till Harvest, and tho there should be scarce, abundance may be brought from *England* and *Ireland*.

The Sum of these Accounts together with the estimated Consumpt to be prevailed in the most publick manner, would certainly remove the Suggestion industriously alledged, that the Corn is scarce and not sufficient to serve till more can be expected of this years growth, for without doubt the Corn in the Kingdom at present, might do much to supplie us, another year without any new growth or Cropt, a people being convinced of the Truth thereof, as a list of the Quantities in every Shire, Town or Parish, should certainly do, every body endeavour to get his Victual Sold before it fell Cheap, (having no visible prospect to have all consumed before Harvest) the price should suddenly fall to be moderate enough.

This expedient I take to best of all, others because it is attended with nothing that is hard or difficult.

There is no Consumption laid upon the Seller to vend at a Price below his own choice, and indeed such manner of Commerce, as obliges the Seller to part with his Goods, at a price that he is not satisfied with, must always increase their apprehensions, that such Commodities are more wanted than they are, and consequently reaches their value in his Esteem, as well as in the opinion of the Buyers. But in such Cases it is much better to remove the ground of the apprehension, it is founded upon a Falacie, as I am persuaded, this under deliberation is, and all Parties being convinced, that there is no scarcity of Corn to raise its price, to any intollerable degree, they will freely offer it at a Moderat Rate, rather than run the Risque of keeping, till it fall much cheaper, how lost has it been known, that after the greatest Dearth that have been known in this Cuntry, some have kept it up till it should grow much dearer, and when at dearest would not sell it, still expecting to get more, till they have lost their expectation, and some have even in a manner lost their whole stock of Grains, keeping within their Granier, till it was eat up by Vermine, Consumed and Putrified, so that they could get little or nothing for it.

The next Question that occurs is, who shal order this Matter?

The Sheriffs, Justices of Peace, and Magistrates of Burghs, have distinct Districts and Provinces, and if all concur not, the Work can not be effectually done, &c. Besides it may be doubted, whether their power can be extended to confiscate the Corn that is not given out altogether, with several other objections, I shall not mention, because I humbly conceive what is here proposed answers all Obstacles of this kind, viz.

That if the Persons abovementioned find their Power restricted so, so that they cannot by their Authority do what is necessary on that head, It is in their power to Represent the Case to Her Majesty, who on all occasions expresses Her Tender Concern for Her Subjects, and what is wanting in their power may be Supplied by Her Majesties Royal Proclamation in Council.

I shall enlarge no further, leaving the Consideration of this Matter to those who may improve the Measures proposed, or fall upon some better Expedient, or withall, must recommend to all concern'd, that something may be Effectually done in that Matter, for the necessity of the Poor Requires it Speedily.

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